

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Architecture, values and perception: Between rhetoric and reality



Lino Bianco

*Department of Architecture and Urban Design, Faculty for the Built Environment, University of Malta, Msida, Malta*

Received 1 August 2017; received in revised form 13 November 2017; accepted 17 November 2017

## KEYWORDS

Architecture;  
Design values;  
Perception;  
Valletta;  
Dharavi;  
Beirut

## Abstract

Throughout history, design values have always underlined a given architectural style. The manner architects and architectural critics distinguish between them varies from that of the public. In fact a style well perceived by civil society was read as pathological by architectural academia. This paper examines the values and perceptions of contemporary architecture by architects and civil society. Through qualitative methodology, a project by each of the following leading contemporary architects - Renzo Piano, Norman Foster and Rem Koolhaas - was analyzed. The selected designs, all commissioned not more than a decade ago, vary in locations from Malta to Lebanon to India. The study concludes that design values and perceptions of architecture as read by members of the architectural profession do not tally with those of the public. The emphasis by architects is on the aesthetic whilst non-architects focus on the utilitarian dimension. Furthermore, the rhetorical language which architects use is not read as such by the public. The assessment of the public is based on the existential reality which they experience. The perception of civil society matters; it is at the core of architectural design values.

© 2017 Higher Education Press Limited Company. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of KeAi. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The theme of the XIV World Triennial of Architecture held in Sofia in May 2015 was “Values in Architecture”

E-mail address: [lino.bianco@um.edu.mt](mailto:lino.bianco@um.edu.mt)

Peer review under responsibility of Southeast University.

([International Academy of Architecture, 2015](#)). A Google search on architectural values leads one to the Wikipedia article entitled “Architectural design values.” Contents of this article, which classifies and lists the following design values – aesthetic, social, environmental, traditional, gender-based, economic, novel, mathematical, and scientific – follow that [Ukabi \(2015\)](#). On the basis of [Lera \(1980\)](#), Ukabi tabulated the values and intentions that historically

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foar.2017.11.003>

2095-2635/© 2017 Higher Education Press Limited Company. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of KeAi. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

**Table 1** Architectural design values and respective intentions (Based on [Ukabi, 2015](#)).

Design Value	Intentions
<i>Aesthetic</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Artistic aspects and self-expression</li> <li>2. Spirit of the time</li> <li>3. Structural, functional, and material honesty</li> <li>4. Simplicity and minimalism</li> <li>5. Natural and organic</li> <li>6. Classical, traditional, and vernacular</li> <li>7. Regionalism</li> </ol>
<i>Social</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social change</li> <li>2. Consultation and participation</li> <li>3. Crime prevention</li> <li>4. The "Third world"</li> </ol>
<i>Environmental</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Green and sustainability</li> <li>2. Re-use and modification</li> <li>3. Health</li> </ol>
<i>Traditional</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tradition</li> <li>2. Restoration and preservation</li> <li>3. Vernacular</li> </ol>
<i>Other</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gender-based</li> <li>2. Economic</li> <li>3. Novel</li> <li>4. Mathematical and scientific</li> </ol>

shaped architectural design ([Table 1](#)). A discussion of architectural values presupposes a contemporary working definition of architecture and architectural style, the language through which architecture is communicated.

Various definitions, historical and contemporary, were put forward and a recent publication included a list ([Quintal, 2016](#)). Architecture is often considered in terms of elevations and architectural elements, thereby failing to address its essence. Recalling [Celiker and Cavusoglu \(2005\)](#), [Cresswell](#) notes that "To illustrate this idea, Frank Lloyd Wright used to love using the example of Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu. Centuries ago Lao Tzu asked, 'What is the essence of the cup?' observing poetically. 'It is the space within that makes the cup useful.' It is the space that the cup contains that actually gives meaning to the cup - this is its essence. Paralleling Lao Tzu, Wright used to point out that 'the essence of architecture is the three-dimensional space(s) created for human habitation.'" For Wright, "All fine architectural values are human values, else not valuable."

Throughout history, architectural movements have represented differing values and have given rise to varying perceptions. Baroque was a style which was embraced by the public but took long to be respected by architects and architectural critics ([Bianco, 2016a](#)). These critics considered baroque as pathological. On the other hand, modernism features an ethic and an aesthetic aspect ([Bianco, 2000](#)). This style conveyed the values of innovative philosophy; such values were and still are respected academically. However, the public despised Modernism; with the absence of ornaments, this style was considered monotonous. The case of Post-Modernism was the contrary; it was well-received by the public and detested by architects ([Celiker and Cavusoglu, 2005](#)). This paper examines the values and perception of architecture by the public as contrasted with the value of works of leading contemporary 'star' architects whose projects place a country on the world map of architecture. Signature designs by these architects have rendered the world a global village of contemporary architectural dialect.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Research methodology

This study is based on a qualitative methodology which performs the following:

- (i) identifies three contemporary 'star' architects who succeeded in the architectural world contemporaneously;
- (ii) identifies a design proposal for a mega project by each of these architects with the following properties:
  - a. put forward in recent years (circa less than 10 years old);
  - b. generated significant engagement of civil society

Pritzker Architectural Prize was used as criterion in selection of the architects. This award, which was established in 1979, is the highest honor for an architect and is often considered the 'Nobel Prize' in architecture. Renzo Piano, Norman Foster, and Rem Koolhaas, the laureates for the years 1998, 1999, and 2000 respectively, were selected. Given that these individuals received the award over the same period, they were considered as world masters of architecture contemporaneously. All are members of the International Academy of Architecture (IAA) ([Diamandieva, 2015](#)). The selected case studies, listed in [Table 2](#), were critically reviewed and analyzed. These studies are about a decade old and generated significant engagement of the

**Table 2** Selected case studies.

	Renzo Piano	Norman Foster	Rem Koolhaas
<i>Pritzker Prize Project</i>	1998 City Gate Project, Valletta, Malta	1999 Master plan for Dharavi, Mumbai, India	2000 Development of Dalieh coast, Beirut, Lebanon
<i>Date of project</i>	2010-2015	2008	2013-2015
<i>Client</i>	Central Government, Malta	Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai	Private developers

public; they are all non-green, coastal sites with a significant social history.

## 2.2. City Gate Project, Valletta

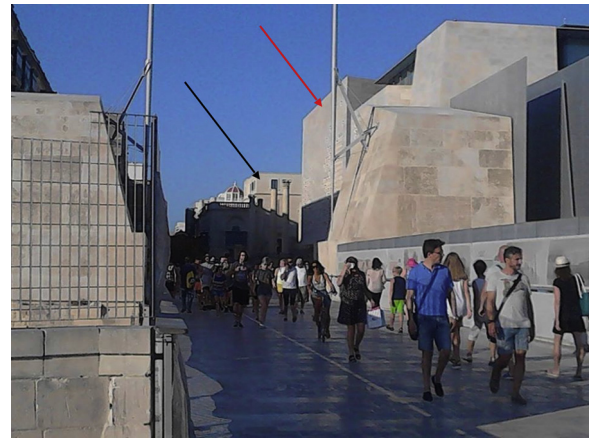
Valletta is a Late Renaissance Early Baroque Hippodamian grid planned city located on a peninsula between two natural harbors. For a brief critical overview, see [Bianco \(2009\)](#). The city was founded by the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in the late sixteenth century. Given its 320 cultural monuments that address the military, religious, artistic, and civil functions of the Order within an area of about 55 ha, Valletta is considered one of the densest historic areas in the world. In 1980, the city was designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site for its outstanding universal value and as a representative “masterpiece of human creative genius” ([UNESCO, 2017](#)).

This city suffered heavy aerial bombardments during the Second World War. Two sites at the main city gate, which remained unreconstructed until 2010, included the Royal Opera House and a block of residences. These sites are located adjacent to one another along Republic Street, the main street of the capital. The former was cleared from demolished building materials, and the remaining parts of the structure were levelled down and left to stand similar to an ancient ruin to prevent it from being a hazard. The latter was cleared and converted into Freedom Square. Both sites served as makeshift parking lots until a decade ago ([Figure 1](#)). The opera house was a neoclassical building designed by Edward Middleton Barry, the architect of the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden.

Including numerous public design competitions, several attempts were made over the years to rebuild the site of the opera house. The Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands had identified the importance of redesigning City Gate and developing this site into a cultural center ([Planning Services Division, 1990](#)). Following the general elections of 2008, Piano was given a direct commission by the Government of Malta to redesign it together with the City Gate of 1960s ([Times of Malta, 2009](#)), executed in a neo-fascist idiom by Marcello Zavelani Rossi and Alziro Bergonzo, and to erect a new parliament building instead of Freedom Square.



**Figure 1** Freedom Square, Valletta, the site for City Gate Project (© Jens Reimann / CC BY-SA 1.0).

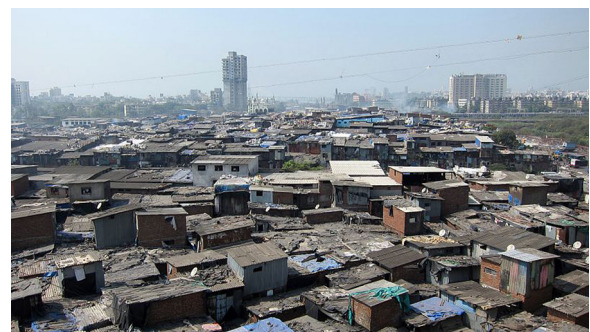


**Figure 2** The Parliament (red) and the Opera House (black).

“During Prime Minister Gonzi’s second legislature starting in 2008, he decided to complete this high-profile project, comprising the City Gate, [the] Opera House, [the] new Parliament building, and [a] new public space, regardless of opposition, with minimal public consultation or parliamentary debate (and significantly without formally informing UNESCO and its agency ICOMOS)” ([Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2017](#)). The 91 million USD project, which was completed in 2015, covered the Parliament building and the Opera House with site areas of 7000 and 2800 m<sup>2</sup> respectively ([Foges, 2016](#)) ([Figure 2](#)). Given the world heritage standing of Valletta, awarding the project following an international design competition, which allowed local architects to participate, would have been more democratic. The array of proposals would have varied and would not have excluded locals sharing their designs for the optimal legislative seat of their government at a time when Malta was commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of its independence.

## 2.3. Master plan for Dharavi, Mumbai, India

Dharavi, which covers an area approximating 2.5 km<sup>2</sup>, has been the subject of several studies in recent years ([Sharma, 2000](#); [Patel and Arputham, 2007](#); [Patel et al., 2009](#); [Boano et al., 2011, 2013](#); [Brugmann, 2013](#)). This site is strategically located at the topographical core of Mumbai, between its eastern and western corridors, and near the Bandra-Kurla financial and commercial complex. Dharavi comprises



**Figure 3** View of Dharavi slum area (© YGLvoices / CC BY-SA 2.0).



around 85 distinctive neighborhoods, “each of which manifests a distinct and unique character, with diverse ethnic mixtures and religious narratives” (Boano et al., 2011). Dharavi is also characterized by dense, low-rise, mixed-use buildings adjacent to one another and without green spaces (Figure 3). The streets are spaces not occupied by dwellings, often limited to the minimum allowable access (Foster + Partners).

Jacobson refers to Dharavi as Mumbai's shadow city: “Some call the Dharavi slum an embarrassing eyesore in the middle of India's financial capital. Its residents call it home” (Jacobson, 2007). Officially recognized as a slum in 1976, Dharavi is home not only to the poor but also to some middle-class residents who cannot afford better housing conditions. “This is at once a city of paradise and of hell. But Mumbai's paradox is that it is often the dwellers of paradise who feel themselves in hell and the dwellers of hell who feel themselves in paradise” (Giridharadas, 2008).

Dharavi is “bustling with economic activity that is integrated socially, economically, and culturally at metropolitan, regional, and global levels” (Savchuk and Echanove). Over a decade ago, annual turnover of business in Dharavi ran a few hundred million USD (The Economist, 2015). The estimate stated by the BBC in 2006 was £350 million, which was circa 670 million USD at the time (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2006). A recent estimate of the annual economic output of the slum is set at twice this figure (McDougall, 2017).

Foster + Partners estimate the population density of Dharavi at over half a million per square kilometer. The following provides insights into the character of the district (Tholl, 2014; Foster + Partners):

1. a toilet per 1400 people;
2. children play in cemeteries and on railway tracks owing to lack of open space; and
3. residents recycle 80% of Mumbai's waste.

Foster + Partners developed a comprehensive master plan through research, site visits, and interaction with the community. The latent objective of this plan was for a quantum leap in the quality of life of its residents by making the district an extension of the flourishing city of Mumbai (Figure 4) (Tholl, 2014; Foster + Partners).



Figure 4 Master plan for Dharavi by Foster + Partners (© Foster Partners).



Figure 5 Waterfront area of Dalieh, Beirut, which was earmarked for development (© Civil Campaign for the Protection of Dalieh).

## 2.4. Development proposal for Dalieh, Lebanon

Covering an area of 140,000 km<sup>2</sup>, Dalieh, Beirut is a natural and cultural heritage coastal promenade (World Monuments Fund). This area is an intrinsic part of the Rock of Raouche, the iconic Pigeon's Rock, the symbol of Lebanon for International Tourism for the year 1967. This promenade has been used by the community for swimming and fishing since the Ottoman occupation (Figure 5). Other activities range from driving to picnicking and strolling. The shoreline supports a rich ecosystem, whereas archaeological discoveries over a century ago had unearthed tools and artefacts dated back to the Neolithic Period.

Protection of the rocky coastline relaxed in the 1960s, when Beirut was emerging as a major tourist destination in the Mediterranean, and peaked during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) with most of the shore ending in the hands of private investors. This situation led to most of the coast being gradually rendered inaccessible to the public, denying people access to the sea. Dalieh has been privately owned since the 1940s. Despite this long history of private ownership, the public made use of Dalieh coastal lands as shared open-access space within the city (Saksouk-Sasso, 2015).

Beirut is not a green city. Citing the World Health Organization report for the year 2011, Saksouk-Sasso notes that although the recommended open green space totals 40 m<sup>2</sup> per person, Beirut allots 1 m<sup>2</sup> per person (Saksouk-Sasso, 2015).

Dalieh is not public property but is accessible to the public for recreational activities. In line with trends in other parts of the globe, the real estate companies who own Dalieh wanted to develop their waterfront property into a private beach resort, removing the traditional fishing facilities of Beirut's last surviving fishermen community (Saksouk-Sasso, 2015). With land values set at a minimum of 20,000 USD per square meter, the neighborhood of Raouche lies at the high end of the real estate market (Saksouk-Sasso, 2015). In September 2013, the owners secured a court eviction order against the fishing community. By March 2014, they reached a deal with all the families except for one. A month later, boundaries of the site except for two access points were fenced (Saksouk-Sasso, 2015). The companies engaged Koolhaas to develop the site into a high-end hotel, shopping mall, and a yacht marina, the details of which were kept secret.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Renzo Piano's solution and public opinion

Smith and Ebejer (2012) reviewed the City Gate Project, whereas Foges (2016) assessed its architectural design, including the conversion of the ruins of the Opera House into an open-air theater. Piano argued that rebuilding of the opera house site as the original was a sterile reading of history. He hoped that this open-air multi-purpose theater will be the "star attraction of his project" (Micallef, 2009). The proposed re-design made use of steel columns supporting a sail-like canopy to provide shelter from elements recalling the original building design.

Citing Smith and Ebejer (2012), Ashworth and Tunbridge (2017) argued that the opposition to the plan was because Piano was a foreigner and thereby cannot comprehend the complexity of Malta's socio-cultural identity (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2017). Smith and Ebejer (2012) were referring to an online comment posted on the Times of Malta website, the one with numerous posts on the project; thus, the said comment was not a scientific representation of public opinion. In his article in *The Architectural Review*, Parnell concisely stated the public opinion on the project: "From press reports and talking to local people, the project is massively unpopular, not only due to the familiar story of a modern building in a historic center being considered inappropriate, but more due to the way it has been imposed on the city, especially when the population's taxes will ultimately foot most of the bill" (Parnell, 2014).

The subheading of an article appearing in *The Telegraph* sums up the popular reaction: "Malta's citizens are up in arms over plans to rebuild the center of their historic capital, which was bombed during World War Two" (Squires, 2010). The main criticism was levied with respect to the proposal of the Opera House site. The general public explicitly expressed their nostalgic call for reconstruction of the original edifice. Main lobbyists against the development included the eNGO *Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar* and a significant group of artists. The coordinator of eNGO had noted that the "Maltese are normally evenly split on issues along polarized political lines between conservatives and socialists, but amazingly they have united in opposition to this project" (Squires, 2010). Local actors and artists signed a petition of protest against the proposed open-air theater. Richard England, the Vice President of the academic council of the IAA, perceived the overall project as a "beacon for the future ... [but was] ... less enthusiastic about the theater" (Parnell, 2014).

Opposition to this project was not surprising. The government decided to bulldoze its way through: "The arrogance with which it has been passed by parliament, with no proper public consultation, is breathtaking. We are wasting millions on a huge white elephant in the middle of Valletta" (Squires, 2010). Press commentaries published by the Department of Information, the official information center of the Government of Malta, summed up these comments (Department of Information, 2008):

"The government ... has already made the capital mistake of coming up with the plan ready made, without enjoining the rest of the country in a serious discussion

about the principal issues. It is clear that, at some point, public opinion will split, but at least it will have split after a thorough discussion and airing of the issues involved."

"At the very basic level the issue is: why should we be doing this at a time when the people of Malta are facing so much hardship and increases in the cost of almost everything? The government would be wise to tackle this very carefully. The impression must not be given that, while the people eat bread, the government is dreaming about spectacular white elephants."

#### 3.2. Opinion of Norman Foster

In an interview by Tholl (2014), Lord Norman Foster's response to the question, "Is architecture the visual representation of society?" was the following:

"Architecture is an expression of values - the way we build is a reflection of the way we live. This is why vernacular traditions and the historical layers of a city are so fascinating, as every era produces its own vocabulary. Sometimes we have to explore the past to find inspiration for the future. At its most noble, architecture is the embodiment of our civic values."

The same interview included other questions. The following is notable: "Most prominent architects concentrate on commercial buildings or infrastructure, while housing, especially in poorer regions or city parts, is widely neglected. Should architecture refocus on its duty to serve the people instead of business as Rem Koolhaas demands in his essay 'Junk Space'?"

The following was Foster's response:

"This is not the case. I would welcome an opportunity to address the mass housing issues of slums. Six years ago, we began a project in Mumbai which aimed to raise the quality of housing, sanitation, and public space in Dharavi, one of the world's largest slums.... We developed a comprehensive plan to improve the quality of life for all living there, which was based around the existing balance between spaces for living and working, yet introduced new public facilities and infrastructure.... it pointed the way to solutions in which the community would be respected and the quality of amenities transformed. This is a radical alternative to the traditional approach of bulldozing, uprooting the social structure, and starting afresh, a policy which has so far failed."

Foster argued that the resultant master plan for Dharavi involved setting up of a sustainable and humane infrastructure. In addition to addressing sanitation requirements, the plan tackled the issue of flooding and included provisions for community facilities, hospitals, and schools. Green spaces were included as integral part of the master plan. New roads were introduced to cater for the proposed public transport and pedestrian routes. The diagonal street pattern allows air circulation, thus cooling buildings and public spaces (Tholl, 2014; Foster + Partners).

Although the mix-use character was preserved, residents still owned double height spaces, with each featuring a living area of about 21 m<sup>2</sup>. Each unit will feature a toilet,

**Table 3** Architectural design values of case studies analyzed.

Design value	City Gate Project, Valletta, Malta	Master plan for Dharavi, Mumbai, India	Development of Dalieh coast, Beirut, Lebanon
<i>Aesthetic</i>	Signature design was creative, historical-inspired, elitist, and quasi-minimalist.	An expression of socio-economic driven creative design; ignored the collective consciousness of the locals.	Design was elitist, creative, and would have branded the site with the global identity of architecture.
<i>Social</i>	Government ignored the criticism of the various sectors of civil society and breached local development planning policy to accommodate the design.	Although the state authorities endorsed the redevelopment of Dharavi, the public objected, and the proposal was shelved.	An e-NGO that was set up and coordinated public opinion against the project. The proposal was halted and site protected at law.
<i>Environmental</i>	New construction was accomplished in a public square, which used to be utilized for car parking. Development is neither green nor sustainable.	The aim was a leap in environment health of both residences and the neighborhood.	The aim was to optimize the site for real estate/touristic development and ancillary facilities for upper end market.
<i>Traditional</i>	Geocultural and regional sensitive, the design used local stone to clad the building exterior.	None	None
<i>Other</i>	The design features a touch of novelty.	None	None

running water, drainage infrastructure, and security of property for each residence (Foster + Partners). To fund the proposed community infrastructure, high-rise residential blocks were introduced as real estate projects for public sale.

Unfortunately, this master plan has not yet been implemented. This response to Foster's proposal is not surprising; it must be read in the context of the neoliberal "Vision Mumbai" and the slum rehabilitation program in Mumbai (Nijman, 2008), the Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP) approved by the state authorities in 2004, and the public opposition to same. This project, prepared by Mukesh Mehta and estimated to run for 2.1 billion USD, called for a public-private partnership geared toward suitable housing and amenities in high-rise buildings for the slum population, with the remaining area being utilized by the private sector for commercial uses (Savchuk and Echanove). Citing Patel and Arputham (2007), Boano et al. (2011) noted that "details of the plan itself were highly secretive, given that the initial document submitted by the government-hired architect Mukesh Mehta outlining the five-sector, five-developer vision was taken on unanimously with no significant call for citizen input." Pressing for this vision, the government is transforming Dharavi into heterotopias characterized by social and spatial exclusion: "The practices resulting from such elements are rooted in top-down control and management towards facilitating the reproduction of capital, denying the inclusion or enablement of the urban poor in the process" (Boano et al., 2011).

### 3.3. Rem Koolhaas and Dalieh

Six months after the publication of the interview by Tholl (2014), The Guardian published an article titled, "A city without a shore: Rem Koolhaas, Dalieh, and the paving of

Beirut's coast" (Battah, 2015). This article, the content of which is summed up in its heading, states the following:

"The activists against the development also demanded in an open letter to Koolhaas that he explain and defend his proposed project. They cited studies commissioned by the Lebanese government that call for protection of Dalieh's cliffs and caves as a natural habitat and archaeological site (flint tools dating to the Palaeolithic and Bronze Age have been found). Koolhaas wrote back, expressing his appreciation for their efforts and saying his client 'has shown an awareness of [Dalieh's] uses, its history, and its beauty and is clearly expecting us to respect and preserve these qualities in the development of our ideas ... Our intention is to actually enhance public accessibility of the site.'"

The open letter by the Civil Campaign for the Protection of the Dalieh to Koolhaas, dated 15 December 2014, highlighted among other themes that the proposed private development will result in the following (The Civil Campaign for the Protection of the Dalieh of Beirut, 2014):

1. erase an important social space and a national landmark
2. threaten a unique ecosystem
3. destroy a rich archaeological site and solicit his "support in outlining an alternative vision for Beirut's seafont" (Battah, 2015)

The civil campaign was continuous, rigorous, and professionally conducted. On 24 March 2015 the Ministry for the Environment of Lebanon announced that it was preparing a decree with respect to Dalieh coast to place the area under national protection. During a press conference for launching of an architectural design competition for the public use of Dalieh, the Head of the Department of Ecosystems at the



Ministry announced that (Civil Campaign to Protect Dalieh, 2015), “We have drafted a decree classifying the site as a natural site under the protection of the Ministry of Environment. We are giving importance to the site, otherwise we would not have held it (the contest) on our premises and under the auspices of the ministry of environment.” She further stated that, “the site was of high ecological and scenic value and access to it should be ‘a right for all Lebanese citizens’” (Civil Campaign to Protect Dalieh, 2015). This claim implies that the civil campaign was successful, and the government’s move managed to rope in the activists in its initiative.

### 3.4. Final comments

These case studies attempt to place respective geographical places on the contemporary map of world architecture through iconic designs. They illustrate the importance of the role of civil society in approving architectural projects. Based on experience elsewhere, the way forward is not public endorsement but active public participation (Bianco, 2016b; Wilkie and Michialino, 2014; Wood, 2002). The autocratic approach of the Government of Malta ensured that Piano’s design was executed against the explicit opposition of various publics. In the case of the designs by Foster and Koolhaas, public input ensured shelving of the former and scrapping of the latter. In Dharavi and Dalieh, the public wanted no change in their lifestyle for an architectural design proposal which was not considered humane. Table 3 summarizes various architectural design values of the respective case studies.

Piano’s project ran counter to public opinion and failed to be flagged with UNESCO given that Valletta is a World Heritage Site. “Controversy is part and parcel of contemporary architecture, especially in historic centers, and it is a well-known fact that dictators are fond of enshrining their legacy in stone. However, few elected leaders have had the confidence to disregard the populace’s opinion and international law in equal measure in order to get a pet project constructed. Equally unusual is said project contributing to their election defeat, as the project managed for Malta’s erstwhile Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi last year” (Parnell, 2014).

In Dharavi, locals showed no enthusiasm in trading their existing lifestyle. Furthermore, little vision was observed in the DRP as noted by Charles Correa, receiver of the RIBA Royal Gold Medal for the year 1984 and professor of the IAA who practiced for half a century as an architect in Mumbai (McDougall, 2017). The settlement evolved its own resilient economy, thereby ensuring stability and permanence (Nijman, 2015). The opposition against DRP led the government in 2009 to grant civil society and academics the opportunity to make submissions with respect to the plan (Boano et al., 2011).

The argument of the Civil Campaign to Protect Dalieh spearheaded the concept of legal prescription to use the private coastal promenade in favor of the public. The uninterrupted access and use of the area for several decades amounted to a prescriptive right to retain such access and use. This situation called for a significant legal

concept whereby the notion of “property to exclude” was substituted by “property not to be excluded” (Saksouk-Sasso, 2015).

## 4. Conclusions

Although one speaks of a bottom-up approach in contemporary urban planning practice, architects manifest the reverse attitude. Although these professionals argue that commissioned design proposals address socio-economic realities for the common good, they are not perceived as such by civil society. The public discards rhetoric talk on quantum leaps in the lifestyle generated by architectural projects. Their approach to architecture is pragmatic, utilitarian, and based on sense perception.

The public has developed a lifestyle which projects the collective values of society and conditions the perception of architecture. Nowadays, people are more aware of their influence on what is approved/permitted for erection at a given location. The public demands consultations on architectural projects and face challenging iconic designs whether commissioned by public and/or private entities.

A classical working definition of architecture is the one by Vitruvius (Vitruvius Pollio, 1914), freely translated by Wotton as “firmness, commodity, and delight” (Wotton, 1624). This triad corresponds respectively to structure, function, and aesthetics. The first two are utilitarian and in contrast with the first, which is artistic dimension. This study reinforces this grouping and highlights the significance that the public extends to the utilitarian versus aesthetic aspects of architecture.

The values appreciated by the public are primarily functional and are perceived and judged in terms of serviceability. The language of architects on architecture is rhetorical, a language ignored by the public. The approach of architects is paternalistic, whereas civil society demands a bottom-up approach which considers living realities, values, and perceptions of the public. Architecture impinges on the public domain. Thus, this field is not restricted to the remits of the clients, whether they are public or private organizations. Public opinion on architecture can pass or fail an architectural proposal.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions on an earlier version of this article. The author expresses gratitude to Foster + Partners and the Civil Campaign for the Protection of Dalieh of Raouche for allowing the author to reproduce Figs. 4 and 5, respectively.

This research was financially supported by the Academic Work Resources Fund of the University of Malta.

## References

- Ashworth, G.J., Tunbridge, J.E., 2017. Multiple approaches to heritage in urban regeneration: the case of City Gate, Valletta. *J. Urban Des.* 22 (4), 494–501.
- Battah, H., 2015. A city without a shore: Rem Koolhaas, Dalieh and the paving of Beirut’s coast. *The Guardian* (17 March 2015).

- Bianco, L., 2000. Masonry and the Modernist Ethic. *Mason. Soc. J.* 18 (2), 95-99.
- Bianco, L., 2009. Valletta: a city in history. *Melita Theol.* 60 (2), 3-20.
- Bianco, L., 2016a. In defence of Baroque: the Wolfflin-Frankl-Giedion tradition. *J. Baroque Stud.* 1 (4), 5-20.
- Bianco, L., 2016b. Participatory engagement in urban design process: the case of an urban settlement in Malta. *Spatium* 35, 71-78.
- Boano, C., Garcia Lamarca, M., Hunter, W., 2011. The frontlines of contested urbanism: megaprojects and mega-resistances in Dharavi. *J. Dev. Soc.* 27 (3-4), 295-326.
- Boano, C., Hunter, W., Newton, C. (Eds.), 2013. *Contested Urbanism in Dharavi: Writings and project for the resilient city.* The Bartlett, University College London, London.
- Brugmann, J., 2013. The making of Dharavi's city system. In: Campana, J. (Ed.), *Dharavi: The City Within.* Harper Collins, New York, pp. 41-54.
- Civil Campaign to Protect Dalieh, 2015. Ministry announces decree to protect Dalieh coast. *Beirut Report* (24 March 2015). (<http://www.beirutreport.com/tag/civil-campaign-to-protect-dalieh>).
- Celiker, A., Cavusoglu, B., 2005. Questioning architectural design regarding the role of far-eastern philosophies on human-well-being. In: *Proceedings of the 5th International Postgraduate Research Conference in the Built Environment*, University of Salford, Manchester, 14-15 April 2005, pp. 305-311.
- Cresswell, P., What Is Architecture? *Rebirth of ReasonTM*. ([http://rebirthofreason.com/Articles/Cresswell/What\\_Is\\_Architecture.shtml](http://rebirthofreason.com/Articles/Cresswell/What_Is_Architecture.shtml)).
- Department of Information, 2008. Press Commentaries: Piano piano (23 February 2008). Malta: Government of Malta. (<http://www.doi-archived.gov.mt/EN/commentaries/2008/12/ind21.asp>).
- Diamandieva, M. (Ed.), 2015. *Masters of Interarchitecture.* Sofia, International Academy of Architecture.
- Foges, C., 2016. Gateway to the Past. *Archit. Rec.* 204 (5), 150-157.
- Giridharadas, A., 2008. Mumbai, Striving and Sinking. *The New York Times* (08 November 2008). (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/09/weekinreview/09giridharadas.html>).
- International Academy of Architecture, 2015. XIV World Triennial of Architecture 'InterArch 2015': Values in Architecture (17-20 May 2015). Sofia, International Academy of Architecture.
- Jacobson, M., 2007. Dharavi: Mumbai's Shadow City. *National Geographic*, (May 2007), 68-93.
- Lera, S.G., 1980. *Designer's Values and the Evaluation of Designs* (Ph.D. thesis). Royal College of Art, London.
- McDougall, D., 2017. Waste not, want not in the £700m slum. *The Guardian* (04 March 2017).
- Micallef, M., 2009. Renzo Piano interviewed, *Times of Malta* (22 June 2009, 21:30).
- Nijman, J., 2008. Against the Odds: slum rehabilitation in neoliberal Mumbai. *Cities* 25 (2), 73-85.
- Nijman, J., 2015. India's urban future: views from the slum. *Am. Behav. Sci.* 59 (3), 406-423.
- Parnell, S., 2014. Renzo piano courts controversy in Malta. *The Architectural Review* (29 January 2014).
- Patel, S., Arputham, J., 2007. An offer of partnership or a promise of conflict in Dharavi, Mumbai? *Environ. Urban.* 19 (1), 501-508.
- Patel, S., Arputham, J., Burra, S., Savchuk, K., 2009. Getting the information base for Dharavi's redevelopment. *Environ. Urban.* 21 (1), 241-251.
- Planning Services Division, 1990. *Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands.* Ministry for Development of Infrastructure, Malta.
- Quintal, B., 2016. 121 Definitions of Architecture. *archdaily.com* (17 October 2016).
- Saksouk-Sasso, A., 2015. Making spaces for communal sovereignty: the story of Beirut's Dalieh. *Arab Stud. J.* 23 (1), 296-318.
- Savchuk, K., Echanove, M., Dharavi, (<http://www.urbantypoon.com/dharavi.htm>).
- Sharma, K., 2000. *Rediscovering Dharavi: stories from Asia's largest slum.* Penguin, New Delhi.
- Smith, A., Ebejer, J., 2012. Outward versus Inward Orientation of Island Capital: the Case of Valletta. *Curr. Issues Tour.* 15 (1-2), 137-152.
- Squires, N., 2010. Maltese anger at plans to rebuild Valletta: Malta's citizens are up in arms over plans to rebuild the centre of their historic capital, which was bombed during World War Two. *The Telegraph*. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/malta/7697046/Maltese-anger-at-plans-to-rebuild-Valletta.html>).
- The Civil Campaign to Preserve the Dalieh of Beirut, 2014. Open Letter to Mr. Rem Koolhaas. *Jadaliyya*. (<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20264/open-letter-to-mr.-rem-koolhaas>).
- Tholl, M., 2014. Architecture is an expression of values. *The European* (16 October 2014). (<http://www.theeuropean-magazine.com/norman-foster/9114-the-role-of-architecture-in-todays-society>).
- Ukabi, E., 2015. Conserving the Architects' Jewel in the 21st century. *Archit. Res.* 5 (1), 10-15.
- UNESCO, 2017. World heritage list: city of Valletta. (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/131>).
- Vitruvius Pollio, M., 1914. *De Architectura: libri Decem.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Transl. by M.H. Morgan).
- Wilkie, S., Michialino, P., 2014. The influence of participative co-production use for urban public-space regeneration on residents' perceptions of life satisfaction and social cohesion. *J. Archit. Plan. Res.* 31 (4), 271-281.
- Wood, M., 2002. Resident participation, social cohesion and sustainability in neighbourhood renewal. Melbourne, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. Position Paper No. 26.
- Wotton, H., 1624. *The Elements of Architecture.* John Bill, London.